C H U R C H N E W S

F R O M T H E N O R T H E R N C O U N T R I E S

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Denmark and Sweden Contribute to the Rebuilding of the Churches in Porkala.

In Denmark and Sweden collections have been started for the rebuilding of the two parish churches in Porkala, the area just returned to Finland after 11 years of Russian occupation. The initiative has been taken in Denmark by the Christian daily Kristeligt Dagblad and in Sweden by "Svenska kyrkohjälpen", the relief organization of the Church of Sweden.

DENMARK

Week of Prayer for the Unity of the Church.

As part of the celebration of the Week of Prayer for the Unity of the Church, January 18th-25th, the ecumenical society "The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius" arranged an "ecumenical church tour" in Copenhagen. The participants assembled in the Danish Lutheran St. Paul's Church, where the chairman of The Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, Rev. Svend Borregaard, gave an introductory speech, and the rector conducted a short prayer service. Afterwards all those taking part went together to the Methodist Jerusalem Church and then on to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Ansgar, the Anglican St. Alban's Church, and finally to the Swedish Lutheran Gustaf Church. In all the churches a pastor from the church body in question conducted a short service and prayers were said for the unity of the Church.

An ecumenical service was also held in the Church of St. Anne as well as an evening gathering in "Grundtvig's Hus" where the Bishop of Copenhagen Dr. H. Fuglsang-Damgaard spoke of his impressions from the Danish church delegation's visit to the

Soviet Union, and Professor K.E. Skydsgaard spoke on "Fellowship and Church Distinctions". The choir of the Russian Orthodox Church sang parts of the Chrysostomus-liturgy, coloured slides were shown from the ecumenical labour camps, and finally there was an exhibit "The World Council of Churches in Words and Pictures". The vice-chairman of the Ecumenical Council, the Methodist Pastor Niels Mann presided at the meeting, at which some 1.000 people were present, and the evening closed with a joint prayer for the unity of the Church.

Denmark's fourth Woman Pastor Ordained.

In February the fourth woman pastor in the Danish Lutheran National Church has been ordained. As mentioned in CN (KN) No. 12 the rector of Skive had nominated Miss Helga Jensen, B.D., for the post of personal curate in Skive, and shortly afterwards the Ministry of Church Affairs appointed her. However, the Bishop of the diocese, the Rt. Rev. Christian Baun, Viborg, did not wish to ordain her or grant her episcopal recognition, as he is opposed on grounds of principle to women pastors. The matter was laid before the parochial church council where there was a small majority in favour of having the woman pastor ordained by another bishop willing to do so, as the law allows. At the same time the church council expressed a unanimous wish to preserve its connection with Bishop Baun, but according to present legislation this was an impossibility if the woman pastor was to be ordained. In accordance with the "Act of Episcopal Freedom" Bishop Baun then renounced his supervision of the congregation and pastors in Skive, and Bishop Erik Jensen, Ålborg, when requested by the Ministry of Church Affairs, agreed to ordain Miss Helga Jensen and to take over the spiritual supervision of her and the other pastors in Skive as well as of the entire congregation. The Bishop made his decision after an extra-ordinary Bishops' Conference where the matter was discussed in detail. The ordination took place in the Budolfi Church in Ålborg.

The matter has given rise to much discussion within the National Church as well as outside.

Contact between parishes in Greenland and Denmark.

Next summer two well-known Danish churchmen are going to Greenland to widen the contact between Greenland's Church and the congregations in the rest of Denmark. The two men are the president of the School of Pastoral Theology, Rev. L. Brøndum, Copenhagen, and Home missionary Mr. Hans Munck, Århus. During the summer conference for Greenland clergymen and catechists, Rev. Brøndum is to lecture on pastoral theology, and Mr. Munck, who is the leader of the "Young Homes Movement" in Denmark, is especially to deal with the problems of the home. But both men are also to prepare the way for a more widespread direct contact between individual congregations in Greenland and the rest of Denmark, a contact which will undoubtedly be of the greatest importance in many parts of Greenland where small congregations often lead very isolated lives.

Greenland has a population of 25.000, nearly all of whom belong to the National Lutheran Church.

The Church in Contact with as Many People as the Cinemas.

Rector Erling Steenberg in Haderslev, one of the largest towns in South Jutland, and the local county clerk have made an investigation proving that the Church gets into contact with just as many people as the town's cinemas.

For 3 months the number of cinema-goers was calculated, in all about 124.000. The managers believed that about one third of these were people from the surrounding rural areas, so that the number of cinema-goers from the town itself was 82-83.000. During the same three months the number of those taking part in church services and church ceremonies (in the National Church as well as the Free Churches), prayer services, church gatherings and Bible study groups, plus 4.000, the number estimated to hear services etc. on the wireless, was also 82-83.000, i.e. corresponding to the number of cinema-goers.

The investigation was completed about a year ago, and was not originally intended to be published, but now the Danish press has got hold of the matter, and the results have now been brought to the attention of the public.

With reference to the publication of these facts Pastor Steenberg says: - This does not mean that we are to cheer at the position of the National Church, but neither must we attach too much importance to the old saw about the half-empty churches. In reality the Church is far more deeply rooted in the people's consciousness than is generally believed.

The Two Ecumenical Weeks of Prayer.

The Ecumenical Council in Denmark has now received a reply to its address to the World Council of Churches regarding the possibility of co-ordinating the two weeks of prayer of an ecumenical nature in January. In the reply it is pointed out that the question has often been brought to the attention of the international board of the Evangelical Alliance, which wished to postpone a more detailed discussion. For the time being the individual countries and churches are recommended to find a way out of the problem making due allowance for each other in wisdom and brotherly love.

In its reply the World Council of Churches emphasizes the difficulty of moving the ecumenical week of prayer from January 18th-25th, as this is also celebrated by Roman Catholics, who celebrate January 18th as the Feast Day of St. Peter's Chair and January 25th in commemoration of the conversion of St. Paul.

New Danish Bishop.

In the diocese of Haderslev near the Danish-German frontier Bishop C.W. Noack has reached the age of retirement, and in his place Dean Frode Beyer, Rinkenæs, has been elected. The new Bishop, who is 62, is familiar with conditions in the border district from the 32 years he has served as a clergyman there. He advocates a moderate policy in frontier problems and is interested in ecumenical work.

Order of Merit to Danish Missionary.

The Danish missionary, Miss Mary Østergaard, who works among the Armenians in Greece, has been awarded the Danish Order of Merit in silver. The medal was presented by the Counsellor to the Danish Legation in Athens Mr. Høegh-Guldberg as an official recognition of the great self-sacrificing work Mary Østergaard has carried on for nearly 30 years in the service of the Danish Armenian mission.

Prominent Danish Layman Dies.

Dr. Mogens Fenger, for many years chief surgeon at the Nursing Sisters' Hospital in Copenhagen, has suddenly died, 66 years old. Dr. Fenger was valued in the medical world and as a Christian layman. During the Occupation he held a difficult position as chairman of the Medical Association. Together with the present Prime Minister Mr. H.C. Hansen he had the Medical Association's office send out an appeal to all doctors to warn their Jewish patients, just before the Germans began their persecution of the Jews in Denmark. Dr. Fenger took the initiative in starting and became chairman of the institution "Christian Aid", which was established some years ago with the purpose of aiding and counselling pregnant women in an effort to counteract illegal abortions. He also held a number of other offices in the Danish National Church.

FINLAND.

Rebuilding of Churches Necessary in Porkala.

The return of the Porkala district west of Helsinki (Helsingfors) to Finland has been hailed with joy by the Finnish people, but at the same time it presents huge problems in rebuilding. This is also true of the churches.

When the Russians left Porkala it was evident that the old medieval church in Kyrkslätt was badly damaged. The pews, the altar, and the pulpit had disappeared, and a new wooden floor had been laid over the old stone floor. A new heating-plant had been installed with the boiler in the vestry. During the occupation the church was presumably used as a casino by the Russian soldiers. Fortunately the church's glass windows, the altar-piece, and the organ had been removed to a church outside the area prior to the evacuation in 1944. Degerby church was in fairly good re-

pair, though the cross on its spire had been removed. The two vicarages in Kyrkslätt need to be thoroughly restored, and the vicarage in Degerby, already unsatisfactory in 1944, is now so dilapidated that it can hardly be repaired.

In connection with the return of the Porkala district the Russian ambassador Lebedev stated during a visit with the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Virolainen that the gravestones in the cemeteries of Kyrkslätt and Degerby "were removed without the knowledge of the Soviet central authorities when the Soviet naval base was being built". The Ambassador deplored this on behalf of his Government and stated that the Soviet Union is willing to pay the cost of putting the cemeteries in order.

Before 1944 both Porkala congregations belonged to the Swedish diocese in Finland, Borgå diocese, the majority having been Swedish-speaking since the Middle Ages. After the return of Porkala the Bishop of the Swedish diocese, the Rt. Rev. G.O. Rosenqvist, has made a tour of inspection to the district to investigate the possibilities of establishing an ordered congregational life there as the inhabitants gradually return.

The Cathedral Chapter of Borgå (Porvoo) has asked the Ministry of Church Affairs for permission to take up a collection in all Finnish churches on March 11th for the rebuilding of the churches in Porkala.

Christian Literary Contact Conference.

At the invitation of Förbundet för Svenskt Församlingsarbete i Finland (The Board for Swedish Congregational Work in Finland) a contact conference for clergymen, authors, and literary critics was recently held at Lärkkulla Folkakademi. The subject under discussion the first day was the literary critic's standard of values, and both speakers emphasized the fact that there are no objective norms for evaluating literature. The next day's subject was "Criticism and Religious Literature". Here the author Hjalmar Krokfors said that Christian authors, too, must attach importance to the æsthetic demands, while the editor Ole Torvald pointed out that the editor's first duty must be ethical analysis and evaluation, but that literary work must also be treated as documentary contributions and contributions to current debates.

94 o/o of Finland's Population Belong to the National Church.

According to information from the central office of statistics in Helsinki (Helsingfors) about 94 o/o of the Finnish population belong to the Evangelical Lutheran National Church, while 2-3 o/o belong to other churches, and 3-4 o/o are entered on the Civil List.

According to a statistical estimate per January 1st, 1955, the Lutheran National Church comprises 4.1 million people divided into 552 congregations, of which 488 were rural congregations and 64 town congregations. The Orthodox Church had

75.500 members divided into 25 congregations. The Church has 4 convents. Among the other registered churches the Congregationalist Free Church is the largest with 8.800 members. Then follows the Adventist Church with 3.650 members, the Swedish Lutheran congregation with 2.450, the Roman Catholic Church with 2.200, the Methodist Church with 2.100 and the Baptist Church with 1.900 members. There are 1.740 Jews and an independant Greek Orthodox church has 1.650 members.

The Civil List, which was established in connection with the Act on Religious Freedom in 1923, contained the names of 167.000 people at the end of 1954. In 1930 the total number exceeded 50.000 and in 1949 100.000, so that the increase in late years has been larger than before. Of those who wish to have their names moved to the Civil List 70 o/o are men and 30 o/o women. It often happens that when married men want their names moved to the Civil List, the rest of the family remains in the Church. In that way the family avoids paying church tax as this is imposed upon the one who provides for the family. It is consistent with this that most withdrawals from the National Church take place immediately before the church tax is collected. Most of these withdrawals take place in the southern part of the country; thus the cities of Helsinki (Helsingfors), Turku (Åbo), and Tampere (Tammerfors) account for about 1/3 of all withdrawals.

Ecumenicity and Religious Education.

Finnish teachers of religion recently assembled at Helsinki (Helsingfors), where Professor Aimo Nikolainen gave a lecture on "Ecumenicity and Religious Education".

The world has arrived at a turningpoint in that, after a period of church dissension, we are again striving for fellowship. The churches want to meet each other, talk with each other and co-operate with each other, each church at the same time remaining true to its own faith. Professor Nikolainen said that in religious education in the public schools one must strive to be true to one's own faith and yet give the instruction an ecumenical character. In the world of to-day, in which everything reacts on everything, and where people who live far apart are constantly getting into closer contact with each other, the pupils should have the opportunity of getting acquainted with all mankind.

NORWAY

The Egede Institute 10 Years Old.

The Egede Institute, the Norwegian Institute for mission research and information, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. The Institute was planned during the War by O.G. Myklebust, then teacher of church history at the Free Theological Faculty. It began its activities in

1946 under the leadership of Professor Myklebust. Since then the Institute has published a number of scientific monographs, has arranged several courses and conferences, published a Handbook for Mission Work, mission statistics, and the journal Norsk Tidsskrift for Mission (Norwegian Mission Journal).

On its 10th anniversary Bishop Johs. Smemo payed his tribute to the Institute and its leader. "The Egede Institute has contributed towards replacing a somewhat emotional, perhaps romantic view of missions with a more realistic view in keeping with our time and the cause", said Bishop Smemo. He also stressed the importance of the Institute in its capacity of an inter-denominational institution. "It has helped to open people's eyes to the fact that the Kingdom of God is one and that His Church is One".

Among the guests present for the anniversary was i.a. Pastor Erik W. Nielsen from the International Council of Missions who spoke on Communism and Christianity in Asia.

The Egede Institute is supported by all Norwegian mission societies and co-operates with the Norwegian Council of Missions.

Norway has 777 Active Missionaries.

To-day the various Norwegian churches and mission societies have 777 active missionaries in the field. This figure may be found in some new mission statistics published by the Egede Institute. 460 missionaries come from mission societies working within the Norwegian Lutheran National Church, 205 are sent out by the Free Churches, and 112 missionaries come from inter-denominational societies.

In the above figure are included all men, unmarried women and married women. The Norwegian Mission Society heads the list with 277 missionaries, and Norsk Luthersk Missionssamband (The Norwegian Lutheran Mission) follows with 77. Among the Free Churches the Pentecostal Mission has sent out 145, the Methodist Church 29, and the Baptists 18 missionaries.

The survey shows that during the last year 14.2 million Norw. Crowns were contributed to missions, 3.9 millions of this sum being used for the work in Norway.

Bishop Visits Fishing Fleet.

The Bishop of Bjørgvin, the Rt. Rev. Ragnvald Indrebø, recently paid "an unofficial visit" to the large fishing fleet at present engaged in fishing herring off the Norwegian west coast. This fishing operation is one of the largest in the world, and a few days before the herring came in to the coast Bishop Indrebø visited Måløy, a small harbour where more than 8.000 fishermen and hundreds of fishing boats lay waiting. The Bishop held several

meetings in the church and in the hospital ship "Eliezer". This is sent out by The Fishermen's Mission Society and follows the fishing fleet along the coast. It contains sick-rooms, a policlinic, baths, and a large room in which meetings and services are held.

New Church Institute Starts Work.

The Norwegian Church Institute established by the Bishops' Conference in November 1935 held its first meeting of the council and discussed its first plans on February 1st. The council which is to lead the Institute consists of 3 members from the diocese of Oslo and one member from each of the other eight dioceses. Professor Dr. Alfred Sundal, the superintendent of a large children's hospital in Bergen, was elected chairman.

The Church Institute's main tasks will be to contact groups of the people who are estranged from the church, i.e. the industrial workers, and to train voluntary leaders for work among the congregations.

The Bishops' decision to establish the new Institute has given rise to much discussion. Several leaders of the many independent mission and home-mission organizations in Norway have expressed the fear that the Institute will oust the work being done by the voluntary organizations and make all work done by laymen subordinate to the pastoral office. It has also been asked what theological course the new Institute intends to pursue. Others, pastors as well as leading laymen, have welcomed the new Institute, pointing out the enormous tasks confronting the Church.

At the first meeting of the council it was clearly stated that even though it was the Bishops' Conference that established the Institute (largely due to the fact that the Bishops' Conference could dispose of the large gift that made the founding of the Institute possible), the Bishops are not to have the supreme authority. The Council is elected by the diocesan councils which all have a majority of laymen. The leader of the Institute, Mr. Eilert Dahlin, also pointed out that it was not the aim of the Institute to oust or make superfluous any work already being done, but to support and inspire it.

Plans for Big New Evangelization Campaigns.

35 congregations in Oslo and the surrounding area are planning a big new evangelization campaign for October. The campaign will profit from the experience reaped in November when 7 congregations in Oslo and 17 in Østfold mobilised hundreds of laymen for one week, sending them from house to house with invitations to meetings in the churches. Similar campaigns are being planned in several other cities.

New Translation of the Bible to be Completed in 1966.

The Norwegian Bible Society has requested theologians and others to hand in specimen translations of selected passages of the Bible. Prizes will be given for the best translations. The "competition" is connected with the preliminary work on a new Norwegian translation of the Bible. After a year's work a large committee has submitted a recommendation regarding the principles that should be followed in the making of a new translation. The plan is to have new translations in both official languages completed before The Norwegian Bible Society's 100th anniversary in 1966. It is 50 years since the last translation appeared, but several changes have been made to keep the Bible à jour with changing Norwegian orthography.

Smallest Number of Theological Students for 30 Years.

The number of theological students at the two faculties in Oslo is at present lower than it has been since 1923, i.e. 150. Very fews students began training for the ministry last autumn, only 11 in all. If this continues it will create a difficult situation as unusually many clergymen will be reaching the age of retirement in the next 10 years - estimates put the figure at about 400. The total number of clergymen in the Norwegian Church is about 1.000.

Nobel Prize to Kagawa?

A number of Norwegian members of parliament have suggested that the Nobel Peace Prize for 1956 be given to the well-known Christian social reformer and pacifist in Japan, Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa. If the Prize is awarded to Dr. Kagawa he will be the first Asian to receive this great honour.

Lively Discussion Regarding Women Pastors.

The announcement of a Government Bill giving women unrestricted access to the ministry of the Norwegian Church without the former proviso that no woman pastor should be appointed where the congregation is opposed on grounds of principle, has given rise to a lively discussion regarding the whole question of women pastors. (CN No. 13)

The Ministry of Church Affairs has requested the two theological faculties to voice their opinions on the matter. Menighedsfakultetet (The Free Theological Faculty) declares that the idea of women pastors is contrary to Scripture, but that women theologians should be given other opportunities for work within the Church. The University Faculty maintains that in its opinion the words of the Bible and the confession contain no fundamental obstacle to women being ordained, but that women pastors should not be appointed in opposition to the views of the congregation.

The Joint Council of the Organizations, which is a joint committee of voluntary church organizations within the National Church, has appealed to Parliament asking that the proviso regarding the congregations' right to veto the appointment of a woman be retained.

A provision from 1913 to the effect that laymen may be permitted to speak at ordinary services has been altered by Royal decree to include lay women. Six of Norway's nine bishops had previously approved the new resolution, whereas three were opposed to it because it would unavoidably be connected with the tendency to admit women to holy orders.

SWEDEN

Swedish Baptists to Soviet around April 1st.

As mentioned in CN No. 13 the six Swedish Baptist leaders, who were to have visited Russia around Christmas by invitation of the Baptist Church in the Soviet Union, were prevented from setting off at that time. However, they have now received a new invitation for the period March 24th to April 3rd which has been accepted. The Swedish Baptists, whose names were mentioned in No. 13 will thus celebrate Easter together with their Soviet brethren.

Film Producers Interested in Christian Films.

There is nothing to prevent the production of a full-length Christian film, said managing director Mr. G. Hammarbäck and stage manager Mr. Torgny Anderberg from the film company "Nordisk Tonfilm" at a conference gathered to discuss this subject. This conference recently held at Stockholm was convened by Frikyrkliga Studieförbundet's (The Free Church Study League) committee on films. The conference was attended not only by film people, but by a number of Christian authors, pressmen, and others who take an active part in cultural life to-day.

The secretary Mr. Herman Holmgren explained the committee's views on films in general and on Christian films in particular, and he strongly advised that the Church make use of the film to reach a wider group of people. Mr. Hammarbäck invited the co-operation of Christian script-writers and expressed his approval of full-length films as well as of documentary films and children's films with a Christian tendency.

The Free Church paper "Svenska Morgonbladet" calls the conference one of the most important steps forward in the matter of Christian cinema films.

Swedish YMCA-Choir Tours USA.

The Swedish YMCA-choir in Stockholm, which is conducted by Mr. Martin Lidstam, is to leave next autumn for a 6-weeks tour of the United States. The tour is to last from October 22nd to December 1st and will open with a concert in the Carnegie Hall in New York. From there the tour will take the choir around USA with a concert almost every evening. The choir of 70 men will travel from coast to coast, and a special point is being made of visiting those areas where there are many descendents of Swedish emigrants. In addition to the public concerts the choir is to broadcast on the wireless and television and make grammophone recordings.